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SUBJECT: EU IGC - A EURO-PARLIAMENTARIAN'S VIEW

1. Summary: Poloff and Pol Specialist met with European Parliament (EUP) Constitutional Affairs Committee President Giorgio Napolitano recently to hear his views on the EU Convention's draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and his thoughts on the upcoming Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) under Italy's EU rotational Presidency. Napolitano said any future EU "structured cooperation" on defense issues would not impact negatively on EU-NATO relations. He also said that tough compromises had already been forged during the EU Convention's preparatory work and only minor adjustments to the draft constitution should be permitted. End summary.

The IGC should not reopen major discussion

2. Napolitano told us that the IGC should not reopen the floor to discussion of major revisions to the current draft constitution. The hard decisions and compromises had been forged during the 18 months of the Convention. Objections to the draft Treaty that were recently raised by various heads of government and foreign ministers -- mostly from smaller countries, but also Poland and Spain -- were responses to domestic political concerns. Governments had been at the Convention and were kept fully informed by their representatives, whose recommendations they had already accepted. Conversely, while national parliaments were also represented, the level of information on the Convention's progress given to them by their delegates -- including in Italy -- was minimal. Napolitano recognized that the Treaty that will result from the IGC will have to be ratified by national parliaments and in referenda, hence the various last-minute objections, but underscored that reopening discussion on major issues would compromise the Treaty's structure and balance.

QMV in foreign policy and security issues

3. Napolitano remarked that the EUP -- and he -- was in favor of extending qualified majority voting (QMV) to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) decisions, to tax policies, and to decisions affecting EU internal competition. He said the EUP -- and he -- would have preferred much more binding commitments on EU economic governance. Still, he argued, each Convention participant had made some sacrifices and at this point revising the draft Treaty drastically would be very difficult. According to Napolitano, the wisest thing would be for the IGC to make only relatively minor adjustments.

The new EU FM is a weak figure

4. On the proposed EU Foreign Minister chairing an EU Foreign Affairs Council, he was not hopeful on a strong single EU voice on foreign affairs and did not offer ideas on how often the chair should rotate. He remarked that if there was no agreement on substance, the proposed EU Foreign Minister will not be effective: a foreign minister should be the center of "impulsion, elaboration, and decision." However, if QMV is approved for even a limited number of CFSP issues, a Foreign Minister might have some power, he said.

Structured Cooperation in Defense

5. Queried by Poloff on a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and on how autonomous it could become, Napolitano remarked that "nobody seriously believes the EU can be self-sufficient or that it can compete with the U.S. on technologies, nor that it can be an antagonist to NATO." He understands the U.S. and UK's concern with the EU establishing structured cooperation in the defense sector among those member states with higher-level military capabilities. Nonetheless, he remarked that the "future of NATO is in Europe," that nobody in the EU wants to exclude Great Britain, and that it would be "unthinkable" to envisage a European defense without the UK. The EU's allegiance to NATO, he argued, is long-standing and was well expressed in the 1999 NATO Summit

on the occasion of NATO's 50th anniversary, which provided a comprehensive overview of cooperation between European Defense and NATO. Finally, queried on the effects that QMV could have if the decision involved participating in a war, he said he does not believe that a majority position could be imposed on those member

countries that voted against.

16. Comment: Napolitano is a former member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which he joined before the end of WWII, and was the PCI's former "shadow foreign minister" for many years. He joined the PCI's successor party, the Party of the Democratic Left (DS) when the PCI dissolved in 1991. Although his views are largely shaped by his political affiliation, they also reflect his background as Chamber of Deputies President during the 1980's, Interior Minister during the 1990's, and a member of the Italian Delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly during the 1980's and 1990's. He is on the left, but he is a moderate and -- during the IGC -- we expect he will support Presidency objectives.

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